L Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait MSL1
Bedouins MJ1

Mourning

When a man dies, the widow has to seclude herself from all for a period of *four* months and ten days. Well-to-do families confine the wife to the house for this period while Badawin women hide themselves as much as practicable in their tents. The townswoman of Kuwait actually shuts herself in a room, devoid of comforts such as carpets, etc., and can only be attended by another woman *who* brings her food and water. She must not see a man, or male relative, or hear a male voice.

Among the lower classes the belief about this *'ada* or custom of shutting the widow up is, that as soon as a man dies and goes to the other world, he is chained by an iron chain round his neck. This chain can only be removed by his widow's observing a proper course of mourning, for four months and ten days.

The very poor classes in Kuwait do not pay much attention to the above rule, and forty days' seclusion generally meets the case with them.

Graveyards are always looked upon as places of ill-omen and must be avoided, especially *at-night*, as *jinns* or spirits are believed to be moving about them.

The great western graveyard at Kuwait, where the shaikhs bury their dead, is especially notorious for *jinns*, and many an eerie tale is told of people who have dared to go too near the place and have been pursued and even attacked by these evil spirits.

It is particularly bad to put your foot on a grave, and to do so after dark often results in so-called "madness". When young Mushaq ibn Majid al A'aga of the Muzair at Jariya went mad for the love of a lady (*see* page 149) many said, and he himself is supposed to have believed, that he had accidentally set foot on a Badawin grave when he went out of his tent after dark to attend to nature.

Among the Badawin the person dying usually passes away peaceably in grave and dignified manner; this especially applies to the old. I was present at the death of one of Shaikh Hilal bin Faiz'an al Muraikhi's Badawin relatives, a poor man of over eighty. I was camped at Araifjan among my Badawin friends Salim al Murayin's family, and the old man's tent was close by. Salim was away in Najd when the old man suddenly collapsed and gave out that his time had come. There were only women and children about and the Dhafiri camel

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them away without knowing that she had done so. The neighbours' and onlookers' opinion of the bereaved woman rises in proportion to the amount of grief and emotion she displays.

The women of the desert, and especially those living in or on the borderland of Wahhabi-land (Sa'udi Arabia), act in exactly the reverse manner. I have already described the scene when Sitah bint Jumaiin, who had just lost her small boy, greeted us with a laugh and smile as she pointed to the newly dug grave thirty feet away. It was not because she did not feel—she did keenly—but it was against the strict Wahhabi tenets to mourn her dead.

In the desert the grave is dug usually to a depth of four feet, not more. At the bottom a nook is hollowed out in the side of the grave to take the body, the idea being not to crush it with earth as the grave is filled in. The body having been placed in the nook, brushwood is next filled in up against the body, after which the grave is filled in with sand.

DESERT GRAVE

Should the Badawin family be able to afford it, they will, as I have said, wash the body and clothe it in a new piece of white cotton cloth. Should they be far from water, and unable to afford the shroud, they will just bury it unwashed or unshrouded. If a Mutawa's (priest) is at hand, they will request him to hold a simple service over the dead; if not, no service is said.

No monuments nor even headstones are placed on graves in the desert, only a slight heap of earth, eight inches above the level of the ground. In Kuwait, and in Najd towns and villages generally, a rough piece of stone is placed at the head and feet, usually a piece of worn coral or lump of lava. This not so much to mark the grave as to prevent other persons being buried on the same spot; for wind and rain rapidly wear away the low mounds of earth which mark a grave.

Once a person is buried in the desert, relatives never visit the grave. Wahhabi influence is so strong in Kuwait that no one ever goes to

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Unmarked Graves

visit the grave of a dead relative once he has been buried. Even the shaikhs' graves suffer like neglect, and in the great cemetery between the Naif gate and the Jahrah gate (*outside* the wall, few can point out the graves of Shaikhs Mubarak, Jabir and Salim, the last three Rulers of the principality. There is nothing at all to distinguish their tombs from those of any man and woman who has been buried in the same place. It is interesting to know that Shaikhs Muhammad and Jarrah, slain by Shaikh Mubarak, lie in the *Safat* or Market Square of Kuwait with nothing to indicate their burial place but a few stones flush with the ground.

The washing of dead bodies in Kuwait is carried out by a regular body-washer (*ghassal*), male or female as the case may be, who is immediately sent for on a death taking place. This person is very business-like and gets to work at once. Persian (Shi'ah) men are washed in a room adjoining the mosque, while women are taken to special buildings provided for this purpose. The body-washer places the nude body on a large wooden table and pours water over it in quantities. Then with a gauntlet of coarse wool which he puts on his hands, he scrubs the corpse all over with soap and water, rousing it over and over again with copious douches of water. After this procedure he dries the body well, and dresses it up in its new white cotton shroud, or perhaps entrusts members of the family to do this. For preference the washing is done after dark, but this is not obligatory.

Among the Bedawin when a woman's husband dies, the widow keeps herself shut up in her tent, and wears a green undergarment. She goes out only when all strange men are out of sight; she must cover her hands and face with a sort of glove and sock when she moves with her family; this is known as *hiddad* or *hidden* (*mahiddid* or *mahidden*—she is mourning).

(OTHER INTERESTING POINTS CONNECTED WITH A BADAWIN DEATH)

(a) In the desert water is usually dropped into the mouth of a person about to die.

(β) The eyes of the dead person are not closed as in the West.

(γ) The Bedawin greatly dislikes having to bury his own dead. If he can, he will get some non-Bedawin, a settled Arab for instance, if one is

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Bahrain M34

bruises all over, especially on the head, by men slaves. After what 759
must have been a truly terrible ordeal, the miserable girl died and her body was sent off to her old father and mother for burial covered up with her 'abba in a sac. Mr. B was furious when he heard of the deed, and Mr. A, in a stormy interview, is reported to have taken the line that by his deed he had saved his uncle B's honour, and his aunt's life to boot, and that therefore his act was a virtuous one and justified.

The Ruler, H.H. Shaikh Ahmad, is reported to have been very angry indeed when he heard of the incident, and took suitable action against the offenders. It is doubtful whether this will have any permanent result, however, for the prejudice against witchcraft and anyone tampering with *sahar* is locally very great, and Mr. A is sure to make the most of popular prejudice. Already the story is going about that the actual spell used by the slave-girl to kill her mistress was found sewed *inside* lady X's pillow just where she placed her head. This trumped-up yarn was of course spread to deceive and influence public opinion.

JINNS, GHOSTS, ETC.

Dhuwaihi ibn Khamis of the 'Awazim impressed on me (21st 776
April, 1935) that it was always wise to avoid Badawin burial places, 767
especially at night. He explained that during darkness, and especially about midnight, the spirits of the dead often came out of their tombs and sat on them, conversing with one another. Should a person of this world happen to go near, or pass close by, the spirits often shouted after him and shamed him. They went further, and forcibly prevented a man from going about his business by throwing stones at him.

THE 'ARAK BUSH

Among the Badawin of Hasa and Kuwait the *'araj* bush is con- 776
sidered to be under the special protection of Jinns (spirits). It is never 824
cut nor any branches ever broken from it. It is believed that anyone injuring it will be followed and tormented, especially at night, by hostile Jinns. The Badawin, on approaching an *'araj* bush, will always invoke God's protection by a *Ta'awwuz* (*Ita'ah al Rahmân al Rahîm* (In the